

# **The Power of Youth**

*If we really care about youth, if we really want them to succeed, we must reorganize around them. Ask yourself, “What does it take for youth to become fully engaged as valued partners? Am I not only providing leadership opportunities and gaining the unique perspectives of youth but also transforming the relationships we have with youth in designing, delivering, and governing 4-H programs?”*

## **Goal 1:**

**4-H will create a culture in which youth are equal partners in decision-making and governance.**

## **National 4-H Youth Directions Council**

### **Situation:**

4-H youth development programs have a long history of involving youth in leadership roles. In 1997, a consulting group at National 4-H Conference identified the need for a youth-led organization that would advocate for the youth voice and youth/adult partnerships within all levels of the 4-H system. In response to this need, The National 4-H Youth Directions Council (N4-HYDC) met for the first time at National 4-H Conference in 1999, where it continues to meet annually.

### **Program Description:**

The National 4-H Youth Directions Council is the national advocate for youth involvement in the 4-H system at all levels. Members are selected from state delegations to National 4-H Conference where they undergo more than 20 hours of intense 4-H and Youth/Adult partnership training. This training allows N4-HYDC members to return to the states where they are able to teach and initiate successful youth/adult partnerships and connect state youth to the national level. State Representatives serve a 1-year term in which they commit to stay connected to other N4-HYDC members around the country. Through this web of communication, N4-HYDC members share success stories and advice as well as serve as a source of feedback to national 4-H youth issues.

Currently, N4-HYDC consists of 43 state representatives, four regional representatives as well as liaisons to over 10 partners. A 15-member Leadership Team works to ensure a successful internal structure, and reports to the 4-H system quarterly the success of the organization. Youth initiated, and youth-led by two employed college-age NYDC alumni, N4-HYDC also works closely with adult liaisons from National 4-H Council; Families, 4-H and Nutrition, CSREES, USDA; and State 4-H Program Leaders. Through partnerships with youth and adults, N4-HYDC truly serves as a successful example of the Power of Youth.

**Stakeholder Satisfaction:**

The National 4-H Youth Directions Council has trained more than 2,100 youth in the past 5 years in youth/adult partnerships, and these youth continue to work at the local and state levels to impact thousands of their fellow 4-H members. One state representative comments, “Young people today are always complaining about how adults never listen to them. N4-HYDC gives America’s youth the tools they need to be heard.” The National 4-H Youth Directions Council has also developed a strong partnership with State 4-H Program Leaders, who see the benefit in youth involvement in N4-HYDC. A liaison to the program leaders noticed, “The National 4-H Youth Directions Council is one important way that 4-H Youth Development can ‘walk its talk.’” If we are to be an organization *with* youth, rather than *for* youth, it is critical that young people are involved in decisionmaking and policy-setting at the national level. Not only does the N4-HYDC provide a structure to ensure youth involvement at the national level, it also enriches our state’s programs by connecting them to that national perspective.” Another state representative reflects on lessons she’s learned with her work through N4-HYDC: “N4-HYDC is a great way to make sure the youth voice is heard but more importantly, properly represented. This council also provides an essential element to the lives of youth: equality alongside adults.”

**Accomplishments and Impacts:**

Through the work of N4-HYDC youth are currently represented on eight national 4-H committees and have increased youth involvement in governance across the Nation. From advocating for youth appointment on 4-H foundation boards, to creating youth/adult partnerships themselves, NYDC members are truly exhibiting the Power of Youth. They have initiated youth leadership teams on a state and regional level, have served on local extension hiring committees, have evaluated Programs of Excellence, presented at Volunteer Leaders Forums, conducted statewide letter writing campaigns on behalf of 4-H and led discussions with state and national leaders regarding youth involvement in governance.

On the national level, N4-HYDC has connected with partners outside 4-H to advance the 4-H positive youth development movement, and gain further knowledge and training in successful youth/adult partnerships. These partners include: The National Youth Summit, the Department of Health and Human Services, the American Society of Chemical Engineers and the National Organization for Youth Safety.

**Resource Commitment:**

Currently, the National 4-H Youth Directions Council is financially supported by the National 4-H Leadership Trust along with direct and in-kind contributions from individual states.

**Collaborators:**

National 4-H Leadership Trust  
National 4-H Strategic Directions Team  
National 4-H Conference Design Team  
National 4-H Council  
Families, 4-H and Nutrition, CSREES, USDA  
Experiential Learning Design Team  
National Youth Summit  
American Institute of Chemical Engineers

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**Base program to which this program applies:**

Leadership & Volunteer Development  
4H Youth Development

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## **"The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century"**

**Situation:**

4-H celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2002. But rather than build a monument to the youth development movement's past, 4-H leaders looked forward, convening "The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century"—4-H's centennial gift to the Nation. This groundbreaking initiative created a positive youth development agenda for the future.

**Program Description:**

No national agenda for positive youth development had ever been created. That was about to change, but the process would require significant cooperation among 4-H youth development professionals at the county, state and national levels and other youth organizations, corporations and foundations that supported the initiative. With the encouragement of the National 4-H Leadership Trust, National 4-H Council brought together the Centennial Initiative Coordinating Committee (CICC) to lead the design, organization and implementation of "The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century" throughout the 4-H youth development movement.

Conversations were held at the local, state and national levels. At every phase of the Conversation process, participants were asked to focus their discussions on one basic question: In the next 3 to 5 years, what are the most important actions we can take to create the future we want for youth in our community? The CICC determined that the discussions would be guided by the National 4-H Strategic Plan's five fundamental themes: Power of Youth; Access, Equity, and Opportunity; An Extraordinary Place to Live and Learn; Exceptional People, Innovative Practices; and, Effective Organizational Systems.

Nearly 1,573 reported Local Conversations began in autumn 2001. The first phase of the Conversation process produced more than 10,000 specific action items that, in turn, were considered by participants at the 63 State Conversations, which took place in late autumn 2001 through early winter 2002. Using state-of-the-art networked wireless laptop computers and instant polling technology, National Conversation representatives, who gathered in Washington, DC, on February 28, and March 1, 2002, developed specific national strategies and action steps based on the findings of the local and state conversations.

**Stakeholder Satisfaction:**

"The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century" is a testimony to the diversity of America and the reach and partnerships of 4-H. In less than 1 year, more than 50,000 youth and adults representing most major ethnic, racial and religious groups and reflecting the interests of urban, suburban and rural communities in all geographic regions of the country participated in 1,636 local and state conversations. These were conducted by county and state 4-H staffs and the National Conversation, coordinated by the National 4-H Council, and supported by the National 4-H Leadership Trust and the Centennial Initiative Coordinating Committee. Many of the 1,200 youth and adults at the National Conversation also took part in their local and state conversations.

**Accomplishments and Impacts:**

The results from the "The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century" are the most comprehensive and most inclusive ever produced, and they emerged from the most democratic process ever engaged for this purpose. The key findings and action steps from the initiative have been published in "The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century: Final Report," which young people are taking to their national, state and local leaders to emphasize the importance of this new youth development agenda. Through the National 4-H Leadership Trust, and with the National 4-H Strategic Plan as a guide, National 4-H Council has begun working with youth and youth development professionals to implement this centennial call to action. The full text of "The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century: Final Report" is available online at <http://www.4hcentennial.org/conversations/main.asp>.

**Resource Commitment:**

National, State and Local 4-H public and private partners, corporations, foundations and individuals contributed more than \$7.5 million to "The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" initiative.

**Collaborators:**

"The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" required collaboration among all public and private partners in the 4-H youth development movement as well as other youth development organizations; local, state and federal governments; corporations, foundations and individuals. More than 600 organizations were represented at the National Conversation in Washington, D.C.

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**Base Program Areas to Which This Program Applies:**

Community Resource and Economic Development; Leadership and Volunteer Development; 4-H Youth Development

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# **Leadership Survival Camp**

## **Situation:**

Today's workforce is demanding greater leadership, communication, and teamwork skills from their employees. Many of our teenage youth are leaving school and finding themselves unprepared and disadvantaged because they lack these crucial life skills.

## **Program Description:**

The Leadership Survival Camp was created to meet the needs of our Teen Council members (ages 13-18). Like most youth interactions with peers, there was a hierarchical structure within the group. To break the last of these social barriers that hinder leadership, communication, and teamwork skills, it was necessary to push the youth out of their "comfort zone" and into "unknown" territory. With most of the youth coming from "the city," a territory that would be difficult for most was selected—a backpack and camping trip to remote the Havasupai Reservation. The rough, steep terrain made a perfect place for youth to test themselves and their teams.

The program in some ways resembles the well known TV show "Survivor." The youth were broken up into four tribes of six members. Special care was taken to break up cliques, and to mix youth who would complement the team with their talents. Over the next few days, the tribes had to cook, camp and overcome challenges together. An adult leader, who oversaw sleeping accommodations and dealt with emergency situations, was assigned to each tribe. This adult facilitated some learning, but usually acted as a member of the tribe, never taking on a leadership role.

A point system was created to incorporate tribe spirit/unity, challenge completion, innovative ideas camp cleanliness, etc. Challenges included "challenge initiative" activities; quiz questions about fellow tribe members; nasty-food-eating contest; and, other individual and team games. Campers were given three challenges a day mixed with free time, planned hikes, swimming and night games.

## **Stakeholder Satisfaction:**

This program took about 40 hours to plan (dispersed over 1-2 months) and two FTE's for the 1 week the program ran. Staff relied on volunteer leaders to help fill the role as tribe "elders" for the youth. The Teen Council is a year-round program, but this Leader Survival Camp runs for only 1 week. The youth are active in every aspect of the program, from planning to implementation (most of the challenges were planned without them). During the activity, the youth made all the decisions, even to the point of holding an evening "tribal council" to vote on issues brought up by members.

The program was a great success. The activities worked well. They provided an educational format that is both fun and rewarding. At each Tribal Council the challenges of the day were discussed, and the youth described what they got from the experience. Adult leaders facilitated this "processing" and were amazed at the youths' response and insight. It was a great bonding experience for these youth, an outcome that will benefit the entire program as they plan and work together as county youth leadership.

**Accomplishments and Impacts:**

The youth responded very well to the program. Youth who normally didn't talk to each other worked together and became friends who normally didn't talk to each other. Throughout the program every youth was given many leadership roles. Youth who were usually "wallflowers" provided skills and leadership that led their team to victory. Skills that were taught through this experience include: backpacking and camping safety, cooking, budgeting, decisionmaking, group facilitating, self-esteem/confidence, teamwork, goal setting, perseverance (completing what you start), communication and leadership.

Eighty percent of the youth said they developed or found skills they never believed they had. Ninety-five percent felt the experience improved them as an individual. All the youth felt challenged and believed their leadership and communication skills had improved.

**Resource Commitment:**

The youth held a fundraiser to earn the money for this activity. Camping gear was provided by the youth, augmented by 4-H supplies.

**Collaborators:**

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**Base program areas to which this program applies:**

Leadership & Volunteer Development  
4-H Youth Development

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**Goal 2:**

**4-H youth will be full partners, resources and contributors in developing, delivering and evaluating our educational experiences.**

## **National 4-H Council Grants Program**

**Situation:**

Communities across the nation face serious challenges. Homelessness, hunger, illiteracy and lack of education and financial resources are insurmountable obstacles for many Americans. The National 4-H Council Grants program addresses these issues by providing "seed money" to youth and adult leaders who want to design and participate in projects that will address these and other various concerns.

**Program Description:**

National 4-H Council offers grants for youth in local communities, in counties and on the state level. These grants provide opportunities for young people and adults to take action on issues critical to their lives, their families and their communities. Youth take the lead in the design of the project, the proposal writing process, the implementation, and the evaluation of funded projects.

National 4-H Council offers five grant programs that 4-H and other youth-led community groups may apply for. These grants are

- **Youth in Action/Community Tree Planting Grant**

Grants of \$200 to \$1,000 are available to those who wish to be involved in community tree planting and/or reforestation projects.

- **Literacy Education/Youth Leadership Grant**

This grant program provides community action grants to stimulate literacy education nationwide. Grants are awarded to communities in support of ongoing literacy education programs or to stimulate new and creative youth-led programs. Objectives include: expanding the number of books read per week, increasing participants' level of reading, utilizing the library as a resource and learning about different careers through reading. Older teens are encouraged to mentor with younger youth in this program.

- **Biotechnology and the Future Grant**

This grant program is designed to engage young people in hands-on programs and activities that explore the many facets of the biotechnology industry. This includes an understanding of the role that biotechnology plays in today's global economy, impacting areas such as agriculture, health care, energy and environmental management. Youth-led community groups will collaborate with local Cargill representatives in specifically targeted geographic areas to develop comprehensive proposals that outline a community action plan for addressing biotechnology-related issues. Grants to local groups and county-based programs may range from \$300 to \$10,000.

- **Youth in Action/Community Service Grants**

Community service project grants of \$500 to \$1,500 are awarded to youth who take leadership roles and work with adult 4-H volunteer leaders and/or county Extension agents. Grants require youth teams to identify critical issues in their communities, develop activities to address these issues and educate other young people and children on ways to model community service. Youth must be actively involved in writing the proposal and in program implementation. Collaborative efforts reflecting the diversity of the community are encouraged.

- **Feeding the Hungry**

Hunger haunts all types of American communities, not just the poorest. But in many communities, residents are largely unaware of the problem. By increasing awareness and involvement, these communities can significantly boost the food supply for the hungry. Young people represent an enormous and generally untapped source of energy, ingenuity and empathy that can be channeled to address local hunger problems with great results. To help communities mobilize this important resource, National 4-H Council offers grants of \$500 to \$3,000 to teams promoting youth/adult involvement in local food banking, outreach and public awareness efforts. To engage interest and action on a statewide or multicounty level, grant requests may range from \$1,500 to \$5,000.

**Stakeholder Satisfaction:**

National 4-H Council has a full-time Grants Manager who facilitates each of National 4-H Council's Grants programs to ensure that grant opportunities are offered throughout the year, and that grant awards are made based on guidelines included in each application. Awards are then offered to selected applicants and programming begins on the local level.

Once grants are received at the local level, youth take the lead in the designing, implementing and evaluating funded projects. Adult leaders from 4-H support youth, other youth- serving organizations and collaborating community and business partners.

In 2001, National 4-H Council awarded \$241,000 in grant monies to 4-H and other youth-serving organizations. These organizations in turn raised more than double that amount for their own programs. The National 4-H Council Grants program has an impressive record of reaching youth and adults in communities all across the Nation. Last year, local grantees reported that funded programs reached:

- **62,045** 4-H youth
- **208,416** 4-H adults
- **59,436** non-4-H youth
- **242,666** non 4-H adults

Grantees also reported that National 4-H Council's Grants programs were publicized in various formats across the Nation.

- **551** newspaper articles
- **407** radio presentations
- **120** television presentations
- **986** speeches, presentations or exhibits

Reported estimates show that more than 14,000,000 people across the United States were informed about National 4-H Council's Grants program through mass media efforts.



**Accomplishments and Impacts:**

In 2001, National 4-H Council's Grants program awarded money to many different organizations. In fact, last year alone, National 4-H Council's Grants program offered grants to fund 137 different programs throughout the Nation.

Because grant monies are given to different organizations, in all types of communities throughout the Nation, no two grant programs are exactly alike. Grant programs provided through the support of generous corporate and foundation donors, offer "seed money" to fund many innovative and interesting educational and community outreach programs.

- In Minnesota, through funding from the Youth in Action/Community Service Grant, youth created "Racial Regulators," a racism workshop created *by* youth *for* youth. The program was developed to create awareness of racism, defy stereotypes and design a plan of action to reduce racism.
- In Charleston County, South Carolina, the PINK HOUSE conducted a Sports Clinic for more than 125 under-served, at-risk children.
- In Oklahoma, one 4-H'er who participated in a school tree planting program stated, *It is exciting to support our school through 4-H in its endeavor to improve the facilities for the youth at our school. One of our goals is to educate more youth and other organizations to model their community service after this project.*

**Resource Commitment:**

All grant recipients are required to find matching dollars for the money that they are awarded from National 4-H Council. In 2001, \$506,000 (more than double the amount of money that was awarded to grantees) was raised locally.

**Collaborators:**

4-H Extension staff, community and nonprofit organizations, businesses and government.

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**Base program areas to which this program applies:**

Natural Resources Environmental Management Nutrition, Diet and Health  
Community Resource & Economic Development Agriculture  
Leadership & Volunteer Development 4-H Youth Development  
Family Development & Resource Management

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## Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council

**Situation:**

The State of Michigan, surrounded by four of our Nation's Great Lakes—Erie, Huron, Michigan and Superior—is a state of great environmental diversity and interests both from a resource and a tourism perspective. Through a variety of issues-identification processes, it has become evident that the lakes and other Michigan natural resources are greatly valued by young people in the

state who are also often seeking ways to conserve those natural resources.

**Program Description:**

The Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council (M4-HYCC) was introduced by the Michigan Senate in 1999, and is coordinated by Michigan 4-H Youth Development to provide Michigan youth a voice in environmental legislative advocacy and policy development. The council offers teens, aged 13 to 19, a 1-year learning experience and the potential to assume a mentoring leadership role in subsequent years working with key conservation decisionmakers in state government on state conservation concerns. The council identifies local and statewide conservation issues and each year chooses a research topic based on discussion, professional resources and group consensus. After 6 months or more of research and meeting in their regional teams, the council provides testimony and recommendations to a State Senate or House of Representatives committee that addresses concerns of the group's chosen natural resource conservation issue. In addition, the teen council members present their research to local schools, service groups, local government and other community audiences. For the past 2 years, this teen leadership group has been working specifically on advocating for developing a Michigan Heritage Water Trails system.

**Stakeholder Satisfaction:**

Youth council membership involves 20 teens serving on teams that represent the six Michigan Extension program regions. The program involves approximately two FTE's representing percentages of two full-time 4-H program staff members and one university faculty member, with some additional volunteer and field staff involvement.

In pre- and post-participant self-rating surveys for the 2001-2002 program year, youth involved in M4HYCC went from 16.7 to 33.3 percent who believed that they could influence "to a great extent" how environmental issues and problems are resolved in Michigan. Participants went from 5.6 to 46.7 percent feeling knowledgeable about environmental issues and confident that they could present to a group of elected officials ideas on how to help prevent or solve environmental issues.

**Accomplishments and Impacts:**

As a result of the work of the Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council, Michigan Senate Bill 415, legislation to establish the "Michigan Heritage Water Trail Program" was introduced and passed both the Michigan State Senate and House of Representatives and signed by Michigan's governor as PA454 on June 21, 2002. The bill will designate water corridors within the State of Michigan Heritage Water Trails and provide recognition of their historical and recreational significance. The teens provided both the technical research and legislative advocacy work involved in giving attention to the water trails program concept. They then provided testimony that led to passage of the bill. Upon legislative approval, Michigan State Senator Phillip E. Hoffman, who sponsored the bill, said in a June 4 media release, "I am grateful to the Michigan 4-H Council for their determination in getting this program assembled. The water trail program will create more appreciation and awareness of Michigan's water resources, promote tourism and enhance community appeal."

Hoffman also wrote a personal note to the teens saying, “Not only was this program your invention, but it was your energy and passion toward establishing a natural resource program that has made this bill a success. By closely following the bill’s progress you’ve undoubtedly learned that it takes great dedication and hard work on the part of the interested organization to enact legislation. I hope that you will use all that you have learned to work toward establishing more legislation that will benefit the natural resources within the State of Michigan.”

**Resource Commitment:**

This program was supported by a \$5,000 grant from the Michigan 4-H Foundation funded by Pharmacia Animal Health and other donors and a \$5,000 special grant from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

**Collaborators:**

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality; Michigan Senate Committee on Hunting, Fishing and Forestry; Michigan Department of Natural Resources; the Great Lakes Center for Maritime Studies at Western Michigan University; MSU Extension; Bob Wilson, Michigan Senate Majority Policy Office.

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**Base program areas to which this program applies:**

Natural Resources Environmental Management  
4-H Youth Development  
Leadership and Volunteer Development

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## **Health Rocks!**

**Situation:**

As time evolves, drugs, alcohol and tobacco are being presented to youth at alarmingly young ages. This program was developed to build strong foundations of life skills and decisionmaking to reduce youth drug, alcohol and tobacco use.

**Program Description:**

*Health Rocks!* is a project for 8-to-12 year-olds developed by the National 4-H Council, and offered through Mississippi State University. The program works on the principle that if youth are given the opportunity to develop positive life skills they will be less likely to give in to peer pressure to use tobacco and drugs. Unique features of this teaching model include teen trainers and a strong youth/adult partnership model.

**Stakeholder Satisfaction:**

Three full-time staff members devote either all or part of their time to this project. The training team is called a “virtual faculty” and is built on a strong youth/adult partnership. The team consists of 14 youth from Mississippi and adults from Mississippi State University, Alcorn State University, University of New Hampshire, Ohio State University and Utah State University. The team has diverse interests and ethnicity.

Delivery systems also varied. The *Health Rocks!* program was held in after-school settings, community-based clubs from a variety of youth serving organizations ranging from 4-H Clubs to Boys and Girls Clubs to juvenile justice programs, and in day and summer camping programs.

During 2001-2002, 36 demonstration sites were selected to continue the pilot testing of the program. Each site brought unique and diverse demographics ranging from rural to inner city. Youth participants in the project were also very diverse. The demonstration sites were located in 21 states. A total of 6,257 youth were reported as having participated in the project.

**Accomplishments and Impacts:**

Strengths, as reported from the project participants, included the strong peer mentorship component. This included teens as teachers and role models. The decisionmaking skills gained by the youth participants also added strength to the learning experiences. Each lesson in the curriculum was based on a life-skill model.

Mississippi State University Extension Service is involved in a research component of this project that will explore the impact of the role and responsibilities on the teen trainers as measured by leadership skills gained and develop a self-esteem index. The research instruments have been refined and the preliminary data is being processed.

A web-based reporting system has been critical to the accumulation of numeric data. A comment section in the reporting system has also allowed the collection of success stories from the sites.

**Resource Commitment:**

Mississippi State University received a grant from National 4-H Council in the amount of \$570,000 to implement this project.

**Collaborators:**

Mississippi State University, National 4-H Council, Alcorn State University, University of New Hampshire, Ohio State University and Utah State University. Thirty-six demonstration sites in 21 states from Boys & Girls Clubs, 4-H programs, juvenile justice programs and other youth-serving organizations.

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**Base program areas to which this program applies:**

Leadership &amp; Volunteer Development

Nutrition, Diet and Health

4-H Youth Development

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**Goal 3:****4-H youth will develop an ethic of philanthropy and civic engagement.****California Focus****Situation:**

California Focus provides an opportunity for 140 4-H teens and their chaperones from across California to participate in a hands-on experience with their state government and history. In 1999, the Department of Education, through the Nation's Report Card on Civics and Government, found that fully 35 percent of high school students nationwide lacked even the most basic knowledge of our democratic system or the role citizens play in it. High school students, attending a followup briefing on the results, said that participation in model government and civics programs had increased their knowledge and also their desire to participate.

**Program Description:**

The California Focus Program is a dynamic, experiential learning opportunity to increase understanding of the function of the three government branches and individual citizenship rights and responsibilities. In addition counties develop a plan of action to address a need in local communities. The goal is to encourage, enable, and empower teens to be active, positive contributors to their communities. The program is designed for participants to:

- Observe various units of government in action.
- Learn about and simulate the legislative, executive and judicial entities.
- Study geography, history, heritage and culture.
- See that government agencies and representatives are open and available to all.
- Learn that each person can make a positive impact.

As a citizen of the fictitious state, "Sierra Cascade," delegates register to vote, conduct a political campaign, elect constitutional offices, analyze the needs and issues of their district and enact legislation with the goal of securing the governor's signature to make their bill a law. Using the "living classroom of Sacramento," delegates use the California Assembly Hearing Committee Room to participate in a committee hearing and give testimony on a bill and to participate in a mock trial. In addition to these simulations, delegates personally meet and interact with the clerk of the Third Court of Appeals who guides them through the judicial process and swears in constitutional officers in the California Supreme Court chambers. Delegates meet face-to-face with their elected officials, receive an overview of the executive branch by one of the governor's chief advisors and visit sites that have special historical, economic, and cultural significance.

**Stakeholder Satisfaction:**

The statewide Program Representative dedicates 20 percent of her time to this project. Conference staff commit to 4 days of training in the spring. Delegates attend one of 11 orientations, and in the spring receive a study packet with materials related to the year's study focus. After the conference, the county delegations return to their local areas to implement their action plans.

**Program Qualities:**

- Leadership training provided to teens, college-age students and adults.
- Use of the actual government facilities to carry out the program.
- Interaction with legislators and government officials. This creates a two-way impact—delegates have an interaction with elected officials and officials learn more about 4-H.
- Collaborative teamwork between teens, college-age young adults and adults.
- Adult chaperones learn skills in accessing their communities and developing a plan of action.
- Staff learns to use experiential learning modes to facilitate educational sessions.
- Teens learn civics lessons while they practice public speaking, learn to express their ideas, define problems and make decisions in collaboration with others.

**Accomplishments and Impacts:**

- A Scantron evaluation provides feedback on the elements of the program. In 2002, on a scale of 1 to 5, delegates rated the educational program 4.1.
- A pre- and post-test is administered to assess the increase in factual knowledge.
- A retrospective tool was developed this year so that delegates could evaluate their knowledge of California government and their ability to work in groups, act as a leader and impact their community. Those results, available in September, will be used to guide the 2003 program.
- A retrospective tool to allow staff to assess their own growth. The program provides a real-life leadership experience for adults, age 19 to 25, as they plan and carry out the program.
- A plan of action report is requested in May of the year following the conference. In 2001, nine of fourteen plans were completed with a report filed. Past reports are available on UC-Davis website at: <http://fourh.ucdavis.edu/citizenship/commserv/index.asp>

**Comments from the 2002 evaluations:**

- College-age staff - *I have learned to help kids brainstorm and explore all sides of an issue.*
- 16-year-old female – *It has given me a larger view of government and has shown various different careers that would be interesting to pursue.*
- 16-year-old male – *It has given me a way to figure out what I need to do if I have a problem.*

In a recent letter, a 2002 adult delegate said,

*The delegates and I all learned so much and I know that our lives will be changed forever because of this experience. I have always considered myself as being active in my community...I have come away from this conference, though, with an even deeper appreciation of the workings of our government.*

**Resource Commitment:**

Through a grant, UC-Davis Extension can provide scholarship assistance to adults and teens that would not otherwise be able to attend. In 2002, 27 delegates were fully or partially supported.

**Collaborators:**

Assistance from: The Citizenship/Service Learning Advisory Council; CA Assembly members provide study booklets and arrange for us to use Capitol facilities; the clerk of the 3rd Court of Appeal offers court room access; Assembly members and Senators meet with county delegations; the Old Sacramento District offers free use of facilities; local companies donate goods; and speakers from nonprofits, government and business contribute their time.

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**Base program areas to which this program applies:**

Community Resource & Economic Development,  
Leadership and Volunteer Development,  
4-H Youth Development

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## **Maine 4-H Creative Communities Initiative**

**Situation:**

The Maine 4-H Creative Communities Initiative has been designed to celebrate and promote 4-H youth service in honor of the National 4-H Centennial. The initiative focuses on both fostering civic youth learning on many levels—through planning, leadership, service and evaluation and meeting clear needs in local communities. Through this program, Maine youth conduct well planned and supported service activities throughout the state. This program was conceived in response to increasing requests from youth for support for service activities in their local communities.

**Program Description:**

Using the 4-H Cooperative Curriculum System's "Public Adventures in Citizenship" curriculum the Initiative was designed to achieve four goals: (1) to affirm the positive power of youth energy, ingenuity and commitment through contributions youth make in their local communities to the public at large; (2) to provide youth with an opportunity to express themselves and their individual creativity; (3) to increase youth awareness of local and global community issues; and (4) to offer youth the opportunity to do the hands-on design, implementation and evaluation their own projects using the 4-H youth development model. This program was designed for any youth aged 5 to 19 years, supported by a 4-H trained volunteer. All projects had to be designed around the 4-H Youth Development Model and using the Targeting Life Skills Wheel. Application forms were specifically designed to allow youth of all ages to personally apply. All participants were able to plan and contribute on an age-appropriate level.

**Stakeholder Satisfaction:**

The Maine 4-H Creative Communities Initiative capitalizes on the energy of Maine youth, the resources of trained 4-H volunteers, guidance from county 4-H educators and the administrative coordination resources of the Pine Tree State 4-H Foundation. Ron Jones, Maine 4-H Youth Development Specialist, provides curriculum consulting and guidance to the initiative. By putting leadership into the hands of youth, the initiative was able to accomplish many times the number of projects than could have been completed as a coordinated state-level program.

**Unique Benefits of the Program:**

(1) The projects are planned and applications written by youth themselves. (2) The funded programs allow youth to capitalize on their own interests. (3) Each project is suited to fit the needs of a local community. (4) Youth and adults partner actively and enthusiastically through this program. (5) This program provides a unique type of support, as funding is not usually available to youth to help them make a difference in their communities.

**Accomplishments and Impacts:**

Communities served to date by the Creative Communities Initiative have benefited from the many unique services provided by youth. More than 32 individual communities have been served by the diversity of services planned and implemented by Maine youth. Some examples of services provided by youth participants have included

- Creating a teen center in their local high school for a safe after school locale.
- Holding a pet supply drive and a Llama Walk-a-thon to raise money for a floundering animal shelter.
- Providing essential items for young mothers at a teen parent shelter, making crafts and delivered them over a 1-year period to residents of a veterans' home.
- Sewing colorful kimonos for mammography patients at a women's health center.

This program also serves as a new tool for Maine 4-H staff to recruit and train 4-H volunteers. In order to qualify to receive funding for their project, youth do not have to be 4-H'ers, but do need to be supervised by a 4-H-trained volunteer. Interested non-4-H adults are connected with a 4-H volunteer training session near them. On September 7, 2002, there will be a capstone event for the initiative, where youth will work with peers, 4-H staff and facilitator Don Floyd, President/CEO of National 4-H Council, to identify strengths and areas of improvement for the Initiative and will work together with staff to develop a new and dynamic grants program for the coming 2-3 years. This event will be an opportunity for Maine 4-H to showcase the diversity of its program areas, the contributions 4-H'ers make to their communities and to celebrate the National Centennial with donors, the media and the general public.

**Youth development or life skills enhancements accomplished**

As of mid-August 2002, 363 Maine youth, ranging in age from 5 to 18 years (both 4-H'ers and non-4-H'ers) have planned and implemented creative service projects throughout the state. A total of 32 service project teams were awarded funds to participate in 2002. Key life skills taught and learned through this program include: critical thinking, problem solving, decisionmaking, leadership, responsible citizenship, community service, relating, teamwork, planning and organizing, and the many important skills built in the areas of caring and relating. By participating in various service projects through the Creative Communities Initiative, youth have gained very specific skills, including learning how to



- plan, advertise and promote an event;
- use a camera and capture the images they wanted;
- speak up about their concerns;
- do a selfless act;
- create a youth center;
- strengthen their connections with elders in their community;
- run a safety workshop;
- work with guest speakers; and,
- become better public speakers.

**Resource Commitment:**

The Pine Tree State 4-H Foundation contributed \$4,000 for grant awards and provided administration of the program; the Mudge Foundation made a gift of \$5,000 to support grant awards to recipients; and, the National 4-H Council provided grant funds to support seven model programs for a total donation of \$1,400. The total for the program was \$10,400. In addition to cash donations to the program, the success of this initiative lies in the support of youth participation and teen and adult volunteer support. Many of the program participants also partnered with other organizations and businesses in their communities to increase the size of their projects and their impacts through collaboration.

**Collaborators:**

Other multistate, multidisciplinary staff, agencies, sponsors and community groups helped with the program. The University of Maine Cooperative Extension 4-H Youth Development staff provided support as requested by applicants. A committee composed of representative from the Foundation Board of Trustees, 4-H youth, and Extension educators reviewed applications and provided guidance to youth wishing to participate.

**Contact Person(s):**

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**Base program areas to which this program applies:**

4-H Youth Development and Leadership & Volunteer Development

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## **4-H Youth Experience the Legislative Process**

**Situation:**

In a democracy, the need for a body of informed, responsible citizens capable of confronting, debating and, ultimately, deciding issues of public policy cannot be overstated. Given the importance of civic engagement in supporting a democratic government, the decline of civic engagement among today's young people is cause for concern. Lack of civic and political participation can result in greater societal inequalities, eventually weakening and undermining a democracy. Adding to this concern is the passage of term limits that can weaken leadership within state legislatures, as "rookie" lawmakers may have difficulty navigating the bureaucracy. However, with term limits come opportunities for engagement. To serve their state in the future,

youth must have a greater understanding of civic engagement and public policy, as a strong positive link exists between political knowledge and interest. Learning about political processes creates a context for absorption, retention and interest in civic engagement among youth participants.

**Program Description:**

Supported by public policy ideals and curriculum, the Nebraska 4-H Program provided approximately 200 youth with the opportunity to experience life as a senator and connect with state government officials through a Unicameral Day and Unicameral Youth Conference. In February, more than 100 4-H members from across the state converged on the State Capitol for an action-packed Unicameral Day. The day began with an introduction to the Nebraska Legislature, followed by statewide conversations where youth brought forth issues garnered at their local Youth Development Centennial Conversations. 4-H members communicated the impact 4-H has had on them through a wide variety of 4-H displays and during meetings with their state senators. In the afternoon, participants took part in a legislative simulation focusing on general file phase of debate. During this debate, senators and legislative staff coached participants.

For 4 days in the summer, all Nebraska State Senators were teenagers again. During the Unicameral Youth Conference, 55 youth from across Nebraska participated in a 4-day legislative stimulation that took a bill from its introduction in a committee hearing all the way through final reading and voting. Senators, legislative aides, policy experts and governmental agency representatives coached the youth as they progressed through this hands-on, experiential process. Through this experience, participants gained a basic understanding of civic life, politics and government as well as an understanding of their state's own political system and the relationship of American politics to government and world affairs.

**Stakeholder Satisfaction:**

Participants were asked to rate their Unicameral Day experience on a five-point scale with "1" being "poor," and "5" being "outstanding." The Introduction to the Unicameral received a 3.79 rating, while the 4-H Conversation was rated 3.76. The legislative session received a 3.99 rating, while Lunch With Your Senator was rated 3.79. The legislative simulation was rated a 4.34. During the Unicameral Youth Day, participants shared the following comments about the day: "It was interesting." "Good interaction." "I now have ideas to take back to my clubs." "Very good!" "Fun! Fun! Fun! Especially with the lobbyist." "Awesome." "Fun, interesting." "WOW." "Interesting fun." "Nice to have a chance to get personal with senators."

**Accomplishments and Impacts:**

During the Unicameral Day, youth completed a post-then-pre evaluation. Youth were asked to rate their understanding or involvement on a five-point scale from no understanding or involvement to 5 with quite a bit of understanding or involvement. Youth indicated the following:

	Before the Conference	After the Conference
My influence on the future direction of Nebraska 4-H.	3.50	4.34
How to address a legislator.	3.02	4.45
Policymaking is a process.	2.90	3.97
How an issue evolves through the process.	3.03	4.20

Ninety-nine percent of the participants reported learning something from this event. Of the things they learned, they shared: “It takes a lot to pass a bill.” “[I gained] a better understanding of the legislative process.” “Legislation can be difficult and fun at the same time.” “[I learned] what youth can do better in the community.” “[I learned] how the laws get passed.” “[I learned] about debating a bill and being specific about your ideas.” “I learned a lot about the policy making process. Very interesting.” “[I learned about] cooperation and legislation.” “[I learned about the] parliamentary process.”

Following the Unicameral Youth Conference, youth completed a post-then-pre evaluation. Youth were asked to rate their understanding or involvement on a five-point scale from no understanding to complete understanding on a number of factors related to the conference. A one sample T-test revealed that there was significant difference between before-conference and after-conference scores in all measures.

	Before the Conference	After the Conference
That policymaking is a process.	2.54	4.27
How an issue evolves through the process.	2.15	4.27
That conflict and controversy is a normal part of public policy making.	2.80	3.90
That compromise is an essential part of the legislative process.	2.73	4.0
The role citizens play in public policy making.	2.46	3.85
The role lobbyists play in public policy making.	2.15	4.05
Who is affected by an issue.	2.71	3.83
More aware of resources available regarding legislation.	2.15	3.83
How citizens influence the law.	2.71	4.05
Desire to stay more informed on legislative issues.	2.00	3.59
Desire to become more involved.	2.35	4.05

As a result of the conference, 69 percent of the participants increased their interest in politics as a career. When asked how the conference impacted their daily life, youth had the following to say: “[I’ll] know more about it and help others who don’t understand.” “I’ll know what they are talking about when I watch the news or read the paper.” “I’ll know more about the Nebraska Legislature and understand it a lot more.” “I will be more interested in politics.” “I will think about the new laws being passed and all they went through.” “I learned to stand up for what I

believe in.” “I am more likely to go to my senator with concerns I might have with new or upcoming bills.”

Youth indicated that they learned: “what process happens to make a bill a law;” “how the Legislature works and all the details;” “how to debate;” “many things;” “how to stand up for what you believe in;” “how hard it really is to get things done;” “about the role citizens can play in the legislature;” “how it is really hard to [make a budget to] please everyone, but at times you just have to do things that you believe will make our state a lot better;” “how to be a senator;” “what process happens to make a bill a law;” and, “roles of all the people involved.”

**Resource Commitment:**

The Unicameral Day was supported by a \$2,000 donation from Farm Credit Services. Local conversations leading up to Unicameral Day, which totaled nearly \$4,000, were supported by gifts from the Nebraska 4-H Foundation. User fees totaling more than \$4,000 and a grant from the Nebraska Rural Development Commission of \$1,750 supported the Unicameral Youth Conference.

**Collaborators:**

University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension staff, State 4-H Youth Council members, 4-H volunteers, Nebraska 4-H Foundation, Nebraska legislative staff and 4-H members supported the Unicameral Youth Day. The Nebraska 4-H program provided the Unicameral Youth Conference leadership. The Warner Institute provided conference resources and support for Democracy, the Clerk of the Legislature's Office, the Nebraska Rural Development Commission and the National Corporation for National and Community Service - VISTA program.

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**Base program areas to which this program applies:**

Leadership and Volunteer Development  
4-H Youth Development

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**Goal 4:****Youth will lead 4-H in new and creative technological directions.**

## **4-H Technology Project Clubs and Regional Tech Team in Korea**

**Situation:**

Youth in military families in Korea face a number of unique challenges, including frequent family moves (up to one every 1 or 2 years), parent separation and threats to personal security. In particular, the frequent moves means that transitioning youth often feel sad about leaving friends behind and confused and lonely in their new environs. They need to learn about their new community and school and to make new friends. Fortunately, these youth have access to caring adults and highly functional computer labs at their local Army Child and Youth Services Centers, where 4-H programs have begun in the past year with the help of youth development and technology specialists of the USDA/Army Youth Development Project (YDP).

**Program Description:**

As part of an initiative to create 4-H Clubs on U.S. Army installations around the world, Maryland Cooperative Extension has partnered with Eighth U.S. Army's Korea, installations to enroll military youth in 4-H via its state structures. Installation staff members have created special Technology Project clubs within which youth have focused their educational and service learning efforts on supporting other youth transitioning to and from their installations. They have created Youth Sponsorship websites that describe their Army community's schools, youth services, environs and more. These sites are now viewable at <http://www.ys-korea.org/>. Moreover, one YDP Specialist has also established a regional, seven-member "Tech Team" to represent Korea at the July 2002 National 4-H Technology Conference, where the team formally unveiled the Youth Sponsorship websites. Adults and youth worked together at the installation and Major Command levels not only in choosing website content, format and domain name, but also in all Conference planning, participation and presentations.

**Stakeholder Satisfaction:**

Approximately 45 youth throughout the country took part in web design training events held by the YDP Specialist in the fall of 2001. They met weekly in their club groups to finish their websites by April 2002. More updating and editing of the sites continued up to the National 4-H Technology Conference time in July 2002. Updates of the websites will continue in the future. Although they still must meet federal government and Army legal and security requirements, youth feel that they are the owners of these sites. In particular, the most involved participants enjoy gaining new technology skills that will help them with future school and career goals.

**Accomplishments and Impacts:**

Youth in each installation's 4-H Technology Clubs have gained tremendous skills in web site creation, as well as in community member interviewing and community resources and services research. Selected youth have also gained presentation skills in exhibiting their web pages at the 2002 Middle School and Youth Leadership Forum in South Korea and in "briefing" installation Army commanders on the web projects. At present, each installation's Youth Services Program

has a creative and functional website containing very helpful information for youth coming to the installations. Youth new to the installations have found the sites to be useful in learning about their communities and in meeting other youth—sometimes even before the transition to the installation—via online introductions. The regional “Tech Team” members have gained new technology and presentation skills as well as new experience with technology such as Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and robotics. Motivated and invigorated by their participation in the conference, the team has also created an action plan to develop technology literacy, skills and projects for children and youth ages K-12 in South Korea during the coming 2003 fiscal year. Components of this action plan include (1) the creation and/or strengthening of 4-H technology clubs in CYS programs; (2) workshops on teambuilding for youth; (3) service learning projects using technology; (4) the introduction of GPS technology to youth at a leadership forum in April 2003; (5) a 3-day, Korea-wide Web Design Conference for youth representatives from each installation; and, (6) a strong partnership with Maryland 4-H Clubs for additional learning and social activities online.

**Resource Commitment:**

Computer Labs were already in place in the Youth Services centers in Korea. However, the Eighth U.S. Army, Korea’s Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Division supplied the installations with Front Page software programs and the funds for the youth delegation to attend the National 4-H Technology Conference.

**Collaborators:**

Eighth U.S. Army, Korea Child and Youth Services  
USDA/Army Youth Development Project  
Eighth U.S. Army, Korea Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Division  
Maryland Cooperative Extension  
Cornell Cooperative Extension

**Contact Person:**

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**Base program areas to which this program applies:**

4-H Youth Development

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## **Arkansas 4-H Technology Team**

**Situation:**

The Arkansas 4-H Technology Team focuses on senior 4-H members and their interests in the emerging fields of computers and technology.

**Program Description:**

The goal of the Arkansas 4-H Technology Team is to provide career training in technology while promoting youth development through community service.

Various technology-related professionals are invited to every tech team meeting. These professionals lead the tech team through hands-on workshops and answer questions about their specific careers. Some speakers have included a GPS/remote sensing technician, an astronomer and a forensic specialist from the Arkansas State Crime Lab.

Community service projects of the tech team include designing a website for RAY (Raising Arkansas' Youth); designing canned food labels for a local food bank; making large format 4-H Centennial Celebration posters for county offices; teaching web design and photography classes to 4-H volunteer leaders; and, taking digital photos at special events for the state 4-H office.

One special project includes a MS PowerPoint presentation that was made to educate audiences on how to design multimedia presentations for the visually impaired. This project has been presented to many community audiences including the spring 4-H Volunteer Leaders' Retreat.

**Stakeholder Satisfaction:**

The tech team members have chosen to have face-to-face meetings, or workshops, at the 4-H Center every other month. They also keep in contact through their web page forums and a monthly newsletter from the Extension faculty member. Although not every member is required to attend the meetings, there is about 75 percent participation at each workshop. All three of the tech team volunteer leaders consistently attend each meeting.

**Accomplishments and Impacts:**

The state 4-H Technology Team in Arkansas was formed after three Arkansas 4-H members and an Extension faculty member attended a National 4-H Technology Conference. The youth returned to form a small state tech team and design a website to promote their formation.

Within a year, the tech team was able to recruit more than 20 new members, three new volunteer leaders, and one Extension faculty member. The Arkansas 4-H Tech Team also returned to the following National 4-H Technology Conference with new delegates and chaperones.

**Resource Commitment:**

Although the tech team has received some funds through the Arkansas 4-H Foundation, the tech team workshops are funded through fees generated by the tech team members themselves.

**Collaborators:**

The Arkansas Technology team is in the process of building a regional technology team with Oklahoma and possibly other surrounding states such as Missouri and Kansas.

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**Base program areas to which this program applies:**

4-H Youth Development

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## **I Too Am America**

### **Situation:**

Stakeholder input on youth development issues indicated that local youth lacked a sense of civic pride about the communities in which they lived. These small towns and villages in southernmost Illinois suffer from chronic poverty and have few resources to call upon. Often, these communities have high ratios of African-American and/or other minority youth.

### **Program Description:**

The challenge was to create a program that would have a long-lasting and meaningful impact on the youth involved. A brainstorming session was held with local youth, youth leadership, and youth agencies to develop a list of possible activities that would meet the project requirements. One of the options that surfaced was to recapture some of the historical significance of the southernmost part of the state and allow the youth to experience this history first-hand. In doing so, the youth would come to understand the vital role this area played in the development of the early Nation, its westward expansion, and its pivotal role in the Civil War. By understanding the significance of the past, the present takes on new meaning. In this way, minority youth gain the necessary pride to foster and protect their historical heritage.

After a great deal of research, Extension staff members became aware of a project that the USDA Forest Service had undertaken in the local Shawnee National Forest involving the archeological investigation of several home sites in a community called Miller Grove that had been occupied in the 1840-1890 period. These sites, situated on National Forest property, were abandoned. The significance of the Miller Grove site was that freed slaves out of the Tennessee had originally settled it. Several local accounts also indicated that these farmsteads were involved in the Underground Railroad movement.

Contact was made with the National Forest archeologist responsible for the site. A brief discussion of the desire to get area youth involved in local history yielded a watershed of ideas and possibilities. At that time, it was disclosed that another agency in the area was interested in similar goals (Illinois Coalition for Community Services). A decision was made to have a joint meeting between the three agencies to explore the ideal of partnering together and leveraging resources.

This joint meeting proved to be a great success. A project was proposed that would allow youth from these local communities come to the Miller Grove site for hands-on participation in the archaeological excavation of the site. In addition, Forest Service, ICCS and Extension staff would provide historical information, character reenactments and interpretive services for the youth to experience. With a grant from the Southernmost Illinois Delta Empowerment Zone (SIDEZ), enough funds were secured to provide ten, 1-day trips to the site for up to 12 youth per day. The project began in June 2002 and ran through the first week of August.



**Stakeholder Satisfaction:**

In all, 124 youth participated in the program. Local 4-H community clubs helped identify and enroll the participants. In addition to the staff assigned to the project from Extension (2), ICCS (3) and Forest Service (5), 14 adult volunteers participated with the youth to lend support to the program. These volunteers included teachers, school principals, agency leaders, parents and grandparents.

**Accomplishments and Impacts:**

The interactive and participatory nature of the program construct received high praise from the youth involved in the post-event survey conducted by Extension. More than 80 percent of the youth indicated a positive experience as being a part of the program and had developed a greater degree of pride about their heritage and their communities. Several new links were forged with local history and social studies teachers as a result of the program. An additional project is in the planning process to help create curriculum about local historical elements that can be used in the area schools. It is also anticipated that the Miller Grove site experience can be continued next summer, as all agencies have committed to extend the current partnership into 2003.

**Resource Commitment:**

SIDEZ committed \$4,300 for transportation and expense items through their summer recreation minigrant program. More than 800 staff hours were put into the planning and carryout of the program by the three partnering agencies.

**Collaborators:**

University of Illinois Extension, AJMPU Unit. USDA Forest Service; Shawnee National Forest; Illinois Coalition for Community Services; AmeriCorps Vista; Southernmost Illinois Delta Empowerment Zone

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**Base Program Areas:**

4H Youth Development

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